davis_square; Wheel Questions

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crenshawseeds ($\underline{0}$ erenshawseeds) wrote in $^{\circ}$ dayls square, 2008-07-24 08 49 00

Wheel Questions

I'm Ashley Taylor, a reporter for the Somerville News writing a story about John Monsarrat's Wheel Questions installation currently at Davis Square in front of the 7-11.

What do you think of It?

Have you posted questions, and did you appreciate the answers? Or do you just read it?

Or have you never heard of it or seen it?

Particularly, as members of an on-line community, what do you think of the idea of having a community based around a physical structure, "the Wheel"?

Please let me know explicitly, when you reply, whether or not I can quote you in my article.

Thank you.

Tags: art, local characters, news media

Post a new comment

87 comments

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Oron newman

July 24 2009, 12:56:09 UTC

minor correction: that's a Tedeschi's (formerly a Store 24), not a 7-11 Reply



O obnocathewidat

July 24 2009, 13:23:41 UTC

I wouldn't be giving him any personal information, even in the form of anonymous questions. Reply



Onvidia99999

July 24 2009, 13:35:59 UTC

davis-square.livejournal.com/1870797.html

davis_square: Wheel Questions



A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

It perpetuates the mindset that somebody else can answer our questions, which is part of the problem in our society. I'd be for an "anti-wheei", where people write down something they discovered through hard work.

Reply



<u>O cynickalone</u> July 24 2009, 13:40:53 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

i like that idea.

Reply



<u>0 badseed1980</u> July 24 2009, 16:27:24 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

Or maybe something where we ask personal but not privacy-violating questions of any random person and put them in a box, and then drawout another person's question to answer. Stuff like, "What's the most interesting dream you've had lately?" "Do you believe in an afterlife, and if so, what's it like?" No names or contact info or anything. So we'd be able to see input from all kinds of people on all kinds of topics. Plus, it'd be more of a community interactive thing.

Roply



Oron_newman

July 24 2009, 16:51:17 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

Hike that Idea, too. It would improve the installation and its reception in the community.

Reply



O rmd

July 24 2009, 20:02:53 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO reminds me of the 'USENET oracle'

Reply



Oron newman

July 25 2009, 14:23:12 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

Thanks for the reminder, I added a link to that as a top-level comment.

Roply



<u>Q rumpleteasah</u>

July 24 2009, 18:42:35 UTC

Re: A bit of a dumb idea, IMO

davis-square.livejournal.com/1870797.html

davis_square: Wheel Questions

I really like that idea! It strikes me as much more effective than what's been done.

Reply



O contradictacat

July 24 2009, 13:47:15 UTC

It's a cute concept, but the format (how only he can answer the questions) and the fact that he's a bit of a jackass in his answers is disappointing. He also seems to think this project is bigger and more important than it actually is.

Reply



<u> 0 nvidia99999</u>

July 24 2009, 13:53:08 UTC

The wheel is actually quite big...

In the sense of "bulky" :)

Reply



O srakkt

July 24 2009, 15:07:45 UTC

Welcome to Jon Mon's world. Look him up on Encyclopedia Dramatica.

Reply



O contradictacat

July 24 2009, 15:25:16 UTC

Oh god, I know. The fact that he lives around here terrifies me, I wasn't sure how appropriate it was to bring that up in this kind of context, though, ::shudders::

Reply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 17:14:02 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 17:14:54 UTC

Howlong should we hold his past offenses against him, and is it possible that he has genuinely changed and found a new path (as reflected by this installation)? I've never met this guy, and I don't know the answers to either question*, but they're worth asking.

* and no, I'm not going to submit either one to The Question Wheel. Someone else can, though.

Roply



O contradictacat

July 24 2009, 17:23:22 UTC

As long as he's still running "Midnight Seduction", there's no such thing as "past offenses". Being a creepy ethically questionable guy wit the dating site is one thing- trying to lure teenage girls into his house under a pretense of a "game about vampires" is something else, and AFAIK, that's still going on.

Reply

Oron_newman

July 24 2009, 17:25:33 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 17:27:59 UTC

davis_square: Wheel Questions



Now that, I knew nothing whatsoever about. My comment was based only on the 'MIT-Harvard Match-up' incident. I do think he owes people an apology for that one, however.

Reply



O rumpleteasah

July 24 2009, 18:45:31 UTC

lure teenage girls (as young as 16) into his house under a pretense of a "game about vampires" which actually has NO game aspect, has no mention of vampires, and is actually just a big play party complete with alcohol.

Reply



thesplan

July 29 2009, 22:32:40 UTC

I went to the first one; there was actually a *game*, and roleplaying, with a slim book (it's published by a man in...oh, Philadelphia?), and it was enjoyable. And definitely a game, like a sexed up VtM. I went to the second one, and the game aspects disappeared, and I have not been back.

Reply



O cold_type

July 24 2009, 13:54:39 UTC

I think forums like this are much more valuable for actual Information or advice.

Reply



Om bw

My 24 2009, 13:55:09 UTC

I believe it was on this forum that I read about one of his previous projects, MIT Match-Up. I found that creepy enough to not want anything to do with this one.

Reply



Q brynndragon

July 24 2009, 14:07:00 UTC

Oh, it's that creepy stalker guy? I'm sorely tempted to ask if he's developed a conscience since then. . .

Reply



<u>0 nvidia99999</u>

July 24 2009, 14:11:09 UTC

Wow!

What a surprise. God's complex is really getting to hlm! :)

Roply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 16:53:07 UTC

davis_square: Wheel Questions

Re: Wow!

Or perhaps the word you all are looking for is 'oracle'.

Roply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 14:07:16 UTC

this?



Ombw

July 24 2009, 14:15:26 UTC

Yes, and this: http://media.www.hlrecord.org/media/storage/paper609/news/2003/04/17/News/Datin g.Service.Creator.Accused.Of.Harassing.Students-419629.shtml

Roply



Onvidia99999

July 24 2009, 14:29:04 UTC

I hope Ashley Taylor will mention this in her piece..

But something tells me that won't happen:)

Reply



O ice creamempress

July 24 2009, 16:56:33 UTC

Hove that he's giving his age as "35" when he graduated from MIT in 1989. No, Johnny, we don't believe you graduated from MIT at 15.
Reply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 17:34:29 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 18:28:11 UTC

The MIT online alumni directory confirms his graduation year as 1989.

(which article or website says he is 35?)

Reply



Ombw

July 24 2009, 19:20:34 UTC

Today's Globe article says that he is 40.

Reply



<u>Oice creamempress</u>

July 24 2009, 20:27:53 UTC

davis_square; Wheel Questions

Page 6 of 15

That seems possible. I've seen him give his age as 35 lately, but maybe it was a reporting or editing error. Reply



O boblothrone

July 24 2009, 17:06:28 UTC

As far as I can tell, that infamous Valentine's Day match service, with all the privacy violations, is totally unrelated to thematchup.net, which is a project of the MIT Media Lab's eRationality group.

Reply



Ombw

July 24 2009, 18:58:20 UTC

This 2004 article talks about a MatchUp that was "under new management, with more emphasis placed on privacy concerns." http://teoh.mit.edu//124/N4/4matchup.4n.html

Reply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 14:00:41 UTC | Edited: July 24 2008, 14:15:23 UTC

When this project was located on Elm Street near Porter Square last year, this discussion occurred here (followed quickly by this one) and your newspaper published an article about it.

Reply



0 mrpet

July 24 2009, 14:19:18 UTC

It's an eyesore and I would like to know what kind of permit is needed to put in a private semi permanent installation up in the public square.

Roply



O rmd

July 24 2009, 14:19:25 UTC

discussions of JonMon aside...

this question strikes me as odd: Particularly, as members of an on-line community, what do you think of the idea of having a community based around a physical structure, "the Wheel"?

that's kind of a weird question to ask about online vs physical communities given that you're talking to the davis square ij community -- a community based around a physical structure, "davis square"

Reply



O sucrealestate

July 24 2009, 14:35:51 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 14:37:31 UTC

Particularly, as members of an on-line community, what do you think of the idea of having a community based around a physical structure, "the Wheel"?

What does that question actually mean? There is no community "based around" the structure. There is a community around it, of course, but that's only because it was put in the middle of one that already existed Neither have anything to do with each other.

Roply

davis_equare: Wheel Questions



om b w

July 24 2009, 14:51:46 UTC

The wheel has its own online presence here: http://wheelquestions.org/blog/, but it doesn't really seem like a community to me, as it's centered on answers from one person.

Reply



O rozasharn

July 24 2009, 21:04:35 UTC

Ditto.

Reply



O greenlily

July 24 2009, 14:52:22 UTG

I hadn't thought anything about it one way or another. But now that I know who set it up, I'll be staying away from it. A number of my friends have been harassed by that guy, and I'm not interested in feeding his ego.

Reply



<u>Qusernamenumber</u>

July 24 2009, 14:55:53 UTC

Lagree with the people saying it's a little self-important, but Laiso think it's all in good fun and a very creative way that one guy has come up with for interacting with his community. Hoved it when he had the wheel set up along with a meditation labrynth in his yard across from Porter Square. When he moved and the new owner immediately tore it all down and put up a big, ugly "NO TRESSPASSING" sign (as was his/her right to do, of course), I felt like a little piece of the neighborhood's character had died.

Reply



O contradictacat

July 24 2009, 15:28:30 UTC

Is that why it disappeared? Good to know.

Also, I'd think it'd be better and more of a "community interaction" piece if it were possible for the general populace to both ask and answer questions, instead of having him be the only person who can answer questions (especially since he can be kind of a jerk to the people asking).

Reply



Qusernamenumber

July 24 2009, 16:03:12 UTC

Well, ok, I should clarify that I am *assuming* that the creator of the wheel moved, based on the fact that someone at the house was leaving out a bunch of stuff for taking shortly before and the subsequent radical change in the yard. There could be another explanation, though. Reply

Pathespian.

July 29 2009, 22:41:26 UTC

davis_square: Wheel Questions

the landlord actually caused the move; he was not happy with the liability issues that having a public park on property he was legally responsible for brought him. Hence the removal and the no trespassing signs, as people were still leaving notes even after it was removed.

Reply



<u>O usernamenumber</u> July 28 2009, 22:59:03 UTC

Interesting. Thanks for the information!

Reply



Qusernamenumber July 24 2009, 16:04:30 UTC

Oh, and the above (and anything else I say in this thread) may be quoted.

Reply



<u>Q turil</u> July 24 2009, 16:24:38 UTC

Everything really interesting in the world has to start with the idea that it's important to oneself. No one does amazing things that aren't.

Also, thanks for the update about what happened to it in it's original home. I was so sad when it disappeared. Another interesting, challenging, creative thing gone from the community.

Reply



O maelithil

July 25 2009, 13:11:19 UTC

That yard was a self aggrandizing eyesore. I had thought whoever put it up realized just how butt ugly it was, but clearly I was giving him too much credit.

Reply



Qusernamenumber

July 25 2009, 14:04:15 UTC Edited: July 25 2009, 15:35:48 UTC

Some people, myself included actually liked it. Subjective aesthetic assessments (whether asserted as fact or not) aside, I liked that it seemed a sincere effort to make something useful and available to others with the property, and that it added some eccentric character to the neighborhood. It was unique, and at least to me not ugly, and so I was sad to see it go.

Reply



O icecreamempress

July 24 2009, 15:26:57 UTC

It seems like yet another vanity project to me from someone who's constantly trying to make himself the center of attention.

l also think it's visually ugly. If I were doing an "art installation" I would put some effort into making it look attractive and well-crafted instead of bunging it together sloppily.

Reply

davis_square: Wheel Questions



<u>Qicecreamempress</u> July 24 2009, 15:27:08 UTC

And yes, you may quote me on that.

Reply



<u>0 nvidia99999</u> July 24 2009, 22:46:59 UTC

Let's be concrete here....

The guy is probably trying to make a living with this, somehow. Making himself the center of attention is kind of necessary when you try to make a living as an artist (OK, we can debate whether this is art or good art). But if it's true that this guy harasses people and all that has been said, that is a questionable way to trying to attract attention....

Reply



O rmd

July 25 2009, 00:33:54 UTC Edited: July 25 2008, 00:05:39 UTC

Re: Let's be concrete here....

The guy is probably trying to make a living with this, somehow.

that seems a radical interpretation of the evidence. I don't think there's any monetizing happening around this, is there? and I don't believe the creator of this is otherwise displaying public art.

edited to be more verbose...

Roply



<u>0 nvidia99999</u>

July 25 2009, 02:07:46 UTC

Re: Let's be concrete here

Perhaps not YET... But that is probably the final goal... Idea files, companies may want to advertise on these things, whatever nutty scheme this guy has in mind.

Reply- ··



O surreale state

July 25 2009, 02:43:37 JTC

Re: Let's be concrete here....

Actually, I've heard him try to solicit corporate sponsors for it on more than one occasion.

Reply



Q.rmd

July 25 2009, 10:37:59 UTC

Re; Let's be concrete here....

ah! I had not encountered this. In that case, I am mistaken.

Reply

davis_square: Wheel Questions



<u>Oron_newman</u> July 25 2009, 10:59:56 UTC

Re: Let's be concrete here

I'm a bit surprised -- doesn't he already own a big videogame company?



<u>n rumpleteasah</u> July 25 2009, 14,40;42 UTC

Re: Let's be concrete here

actually, he sold all the shares he had in that company over a year ago to pay for one of his other ventures that hasn't panned out.

Reply



O nvidia99999

July 25 2009, 14:56:34 UTC

Re: Let's be concrete here....

That rings a bell...

Roply



O filzinsterts

July 25 2009, 12,20;55 UTC

Last chance to send me your dollar!

The website invites all levels of financial support (http://wheelquestions.org/bloc/donate.htm) and alludes to a forthcoming book. Doesn't PostSecret have a similar publishing program, based on harvesting the work of unremunerated volunteers?

Incidentally, you can witness the oracle at work here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VviCZhLNfeM8.

Reply



0 nvidia99999

July 25 2009, 15:11:39 UTC

Re: Last chance to send me your dollar!

Probably, this thread will be included in the book. Yay, we are making history!

Reply



<u> frumpleteasah</u>

July 26 2009, 01:52:20 UTC

Re: Last chance to send me your dollar!

dear lord... He really SHOULDN'T explain his process. Gotta love the input from the camera man, though. "mmhm..."

Roply

Om bw

davis_square; Wheel Questions



July 24 2009, 15:27:27 UTC

Today's Globe:

http://www.boston.com/ae/theater_arts/articles/2009/07/24/wheel_questions_installation_offers_advice_and_inspiration/ Reply



Opurgatori84

July 24 2009, 15:39:31 UTC

Feel free to quote:

I feel that a project like this exists to enlarge the ego of its creator. Also, I hope people consider the character of said creator and take it into account when reading his answers. Someone with numerous publicly recorded harassment allegations against him is not someone I would wish to receive

As to the community aspect of the project, I don't think there is one: It is centered around one person. Only if the project was interactive in both asking and receiving questions would it truly be a community project.

Please do not quote: I also have personal misglyings against the creator, as I ended up living in a house with him from a craigslist advertisement. I do not believe he should be in the position to give out advice based on my day to day dealings with him.

Reply



Oron newman

July 24 2009, 15:55:06 UTC

I feel that a project like this exists to enlarge the ego of its creator.

Leaving aside the character of this particular creator ... isn't the above statement to some extent true for any piece of art? Reply



<u>O nyidia99999</u>

July 24 2009, 22:54:29 UTC

Ron has a point...

Perhaps what is a bit disturbing is the tension between the obvious ego inflation role of this and its proclaimed "community service" role... Reply



O mamajoan

July 24 2009, 15:50:23 UTC

I pretty much echo what others said. When I first saw the wheel I thought it was for anyone to ask AND anyone to answer, and I thought that was pretty cool. But when I realized it was just one person doing the answers, that kind of ruined it for me. Still, my 6-year-old enjoyed writing a question and putting it in the box. I don't think it has occurred to him to wonder whether his question got answered. (just looked on the website and found it, so maybe fill show it to him later.)

I particularly agree with the poster above who said that it's misleading to refer to a "community" based around the Wheel. There is no such thing as far as I can tell. Just a bunch of people writing questions and one guy answering them. That's not a community.

Reply

0 turil

davis_square: Wheel Questions



July 24 2009, 16:30:02 UTC

You can quote me.

I find it inspiring. I find it challenging. And I hope that others will similarly choose to go out on a limb and do something creative with themselves, for their community, and for themselves.

Also, as a general suggestion, this community is packed full of snarl lovers, who make it a hobby of being obnoxious. So this probably Isn't the best place to find honest, healthy opinions. But maybe that's not what you're looking for? I know lots of news media likes to play up the drama of stories. In which case, the Davis Square Snark LJ community is where you want to be.:-)

Reply



<u>Q turil</u> July 24-2009, 16:31:35 UTC

Heh. I meant snark lovers. Not "snari". Though they probably love snarling too.

Reply



<u>O rumpleteasah</u> July 24 2009, 19:10:15 UTC

you can quote this: This "traveling art installation" definitely misses the point. Having ONE person answer all the questions not only gives a limited view on the situation, but also exacerbates the problem that the creator CLAIMS to be trying to solve, which is that people don't solve their own problems. If it were a FULLY interactive, with the option to ask AND answer questions, it likely would have been better recieved. As a note, I've read a number of the "answers" the creator has put up, and have been continually skeeved out by them. I'm also troubled that this man is referring to himself as a life coach.

do not quote this: I am against it. I always have had misgivings about It. I was one of the people who helped to build the original, which IALSO considered an eyesore (I somehow convinced him to let me put plants into the garden, however.) This is a man who has alienated almost everyone who I know has had contact with him, and I don't think that he's qualified to be giving ANYONE advice.

I know some have asked how long we can hold someone to their past mistakes, but the issue isn't ONLY in his past. Less than a year ago, there were numerous incidences involving him that got to the point of my being completely unable to come close to the house while I was with one of the people who lived there, out of fear of having to deal with this man. He is socially manipulative and not above using his stature to get his way (though to my knowledge he has not used actual violence.) While I was living there, I was never comfortable having any of my female friends come over. The one time I did was when I was moving out, and he leered at her so hard that she told me she was going to go wait by the car rather than re-enter the house.

Reply

Deleted comment



<u>Q.nvidia99999</u> July 24 2009, 22:37:31 UTC

Man, oh man...

By reading your description, a certain BU medical student that has been in the news recently comes to mindle

Deleted comment



<u>O nvidia99999</u> July 24 2009, 22:55:27 UTC

Re: Man, oh man..

davis_square: Wheel Questions

Wrong level in the thread... Sorry...

Reply



O genesavssitdown

July 24 2009, 19:27:12 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 19:27:51 UTC

JON MONSARRAT IS A CREEP

here are some resources:

http://encyclopediadramatica.com/Jonmon

http://media.www.hirecord.org/media/storage/paper609/news/2003/04/17/News/Dating.Service.Creator.Accused.Of.Harassing.Students-419629.shtml

everyone I have ever known to have ever dealt with him personally will tell you, he has no business harvesting the imagination of youth.



O exsplusohs

July 24 2009, 20:23:51 UTC

Holy crap. The more you know.

Reply



Othetathx1138

July 29 2009, 18:39:33 UTC

he has no business harvesting the imagination of youth delicious loll.

Fixed.

Reply



Opluesauce

July 24 2009, 20:10:57 UTC

I find it to be incredibly arrogant, and would find it so even if the installation weren't run by a creep and a sexual predator.



O rumple te asah

July 24 2009, 20:27:12 UTC

amen

Reply



Oron_newman

July 24 2009, 20:35:58 UTC Edited: July 24 2009, 20:36:29 UTC

by the way, to the OP -- you can use anything I've said here, but I haven't said a whole lot. I do think that the cited past incidents are relevant when evaluating both the installation and its creator, and I'll be interested to see how you integrate that information into your article. This may be more than you originally signed up for.

Reply

davis_square: Wheel Questions



<u>Q nvidia99999</u> July 24 2009, 22:38:34 UTC

Same here

OP, you can quote my first post here:

"It perpetuates the mindset that somebody else can answer our questions, which is part of the problem in our society. I'd be for an "anti-wheel", where people write down something they discovered through hard work."

Reply



<u>Q mlhmo</u> July 24 2009, 23:59:13 UTC

I would like the Installation a lot more if it only was a display of the questions people asked, not the answers. It could then be kind of documentation of the questions folks in the physical proximity of the thing had on their minds. Of course, then, I don't know there would be much incentive to leaving a question. But it reminds me maybe of how people throw nickels and dimes and pennies into water fountains for luck. Maybe they ask the questions more to get it out in the open anonymously rather than to actually get an answer. Grouphug.us is an online site that's been around for at least a couple of years that serves just that purpose, and can be at times humorous / entertaining / sobering / lose-your-faith-in-humanity-depressing to read.

I do question from what authority the answers come from. As many folks have pointed out, it's a bummer the community itself can't answer the questions - I've noticed since it's been in Davis Square people have tried to contribute answers and have been scolded.

It does remind me a bit of this feedback setup we had at the cafeteria at my university, RPI. The cafeteria had these cards where you could ask questions or provide feedback on the food and service. The manager of the cafeteria would answer every card and tack it up on this huge corkboard at the exit of the cafeteria. Usually the cards had mundane questions like; "Can we have sushi one day of the week?" or "The meatloaf was gross today." But sometimes people would ask questions like "Should I change my major?" or "Will I ever get a girifriend?" and the cafeteria manager always answered them nicely. :) Those kinds of more personal cards were only occasional though.

Reply



July 25 2000, 00:05:23 UTC

The thing is...

If it's all anonymous then... Why not just do it online? The point of doing it in RL would be that you may get to know some people who live near you better. Perhaps see the problems they are having or what they are trying to achieve and feel a bit closer to them. If that is not possible, then there is no point at all in having a physical installation...

Reply ...



O mihmo

July 25 2009, 14:01:34 IJTC

Re: The thing is...

There's still a difference between RL and online even if it's anonymous. It's that the person who submitted the question/thought once stood physically where you stand reading it, and that they were necessarily in the same area as you. You don't have that with online sites.

Reply



O usernamenumber

July 25 2009, 14:14:05 UTC

Re: The thing is...

"if it's all anonymous then... Why not just do it online?"

ldunno, even with anonymity, meatspace still has a certain quaint charm, when taken in small doses. =;)

davis_square; Wheel Questions

Reply



Oron newman

July 25 2009, 14:22:08 UTC

The Internet Oracle

For a similar idea, but done entirely online since 1989: The Internet Oracle (originally 'The Usenet Oracle')

Reply



O mycroft

July 29 2009, 18:44:25 UTC

Re: The Internet Oracle

But the Oracle doesn't take itself seriously; it's supposed to be funny. (As a priest on sabbatical, I admit it sometimes fails at that...)

Reply



O antimony

July 26 2009, 01:50:11 UTC | Jink | Collapse

I think it's ugly, and falls both as community-building and as art. I do like the idea in general of installation art in that space, but I'm not at all fond of this piece. When I first saw it, I expected it to be open-ask-open-answer, which it wasn't. And the handful of questions I saw were juvenile (I didn't bother looking to see if they had answers.)

Quotable.

Roply

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